

11 NEW SONGS FEATURING THE HIT SINGLE TOP OF THE WORLD AND THE TITLE TRACK DAMN COUNTRY MUSIC

THE DELUXE EDITION INCLUDES 3 ADDITIONAL NEW SONGS!

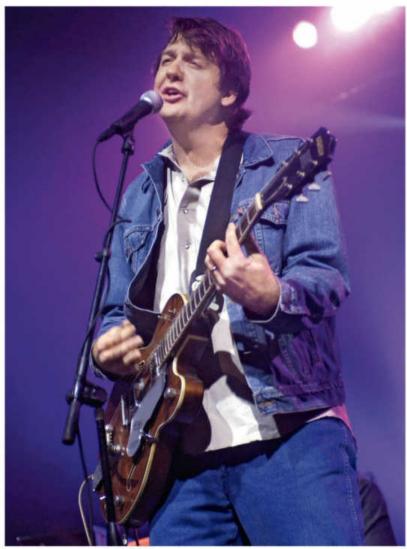






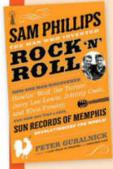
3ruce by Paul Natkin/Getty Images; Ronnie by Terry Wyatt/CMHOF

2001 SATURDAY, NOV. 10



Anger Management

Singer/songwriter BRUCE ROBISON will maintain that he wasn't angry or even in a slightly bad mood when he wrote "Angry All the Time," an eventual No. 1 hit for TIM McGRAW. The idea came to him as he reflected on his parents' divorce. "[That] was maybe the most formative event of my childhood," Bruce related to Country Weekly in 2001. "I can remember thinking to myself, 'Why does everybody have to be so angry all the time?' But the song is not about that particular situation. What I always try to do is paint a picture that people will relate to from their own experience." Bruce was actually the first to record "Angry All the Time," which he included on his selftitled 1996 album and also his 1998 album Wrapped, featuring backing vocals from his wife, Kelly Willis. Coincidentally, when Tim cut the song, he added backing vocals from his wife, Faith Hill. "Her harmony is just heartbreaking," Bruce raved. "I think they both did a wonderful job." Tim ended up taking Bruce's "Angry All the Time" to the No. 1 spot on Nov. 10, 2001.



NOV. 10: SAM THE MAN

The definitive biography of legendary producer/ record executive SAM PHILLIPS, titled Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock 'n'

Roll, will be released Nov. 10. Sam was the exec behind Memphisbased Sun Records, which launched the careers of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and many other stars.



NOV. 13: COMING TO YOU

Friday the 13th is actually a lucky day for **CHRIS YOUNG** fans, as his

long-anticipated new album, I'm Comin' Over, hits stores and online retailers Nov. 13.

NOV. 14: OPRY AT THE RYMAN

The Grand Ole Opry is a great show regardless of venue, but there's something special and unique about the Opry when it plays the venerable Ryman Auditorium. The Opry began its annual wintertime series at the Ryman Nov. 3, and remains at the historic venue throughout the winter months. If you're in town for the Nov. 14 show, you'll catch RONNIE MILSAP, RESTLESS HEART and many other acts.



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The singer and wife of songwriter Rory Feek continues her personal battle with cancer.

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On her new EP, the now-21-yearold tackles the challenges of becoming a young adult.

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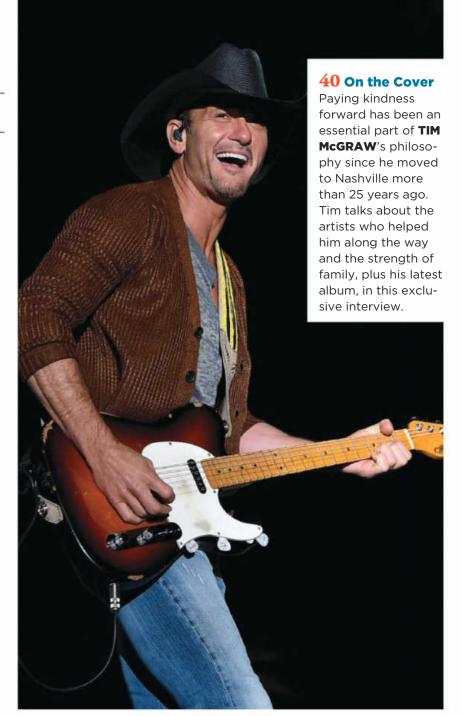
Disappointments and setbacks, both on and off the stage, haven't stopped the hardworking duo from making the music they love.

46 Country's Sexiest Men

Who are the hottest hunks in country music? Here's the tally from our annual poll.

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PLUS!



27 KELLIE PICKLER

You'll find even more reasons to love the animated and amiable star in her new CMT series, featuring songwriter husband Kyle Jacobs.



in Winter/Getty Images; Ke ie by Robby K ein/CM Im courtes y PMK*BNC: Scotty by Jeremy Rvan

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OLD DOMINION

Debut Album

FEATURING THE SMASH HIT

"BREAK UP WITH HIM"

AVAILABLE NOW



FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Damn Country Music! I'm not swearing—that is actually the name of Tim McGraw's latest album. I'll bet he's getting some attention with that title. Deputy editor Jim Casey sat down with Tim to talk about the album and the journey that got him to this point in his 20-plus-year career. Can you believe it's been more than 20 years? Tim has become a country superstar in that time—something he readily admits he didn't do alone—and

he's paying that kindness forward. Check out our cover story on the Real McGraw—and here's to 20 more years of that *Damn Country Music*.

For our Nash Next section, we caught up with Kellie Pickler and Kyle Jacobs to talk about their new reality show, I Love Kellie Pickler. And we do love Kellie Pickler, so we are just as excited about seeing this show as anybody. We sat down with the loving couple to get an inside peek at what we can expect from Kellie's latest reality venture.

And, yes, this is the issue where we reveal the winner of Country's Sexiest Man and the nine runners-up. You, the readers, went to *countryweekly.com* to cast your vote and you overwhelmingly picked Scotty McCreery as the sexiest man in country music. Enjoy, ladies!

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands Nov. 16, as we sit down with *Nash Country Weekly*'s Hottest Bachelor, Chris Young.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!

LISA KONICKI, EDITOR IN CHIEF

FROM THE READER 🗐 🛈 💙

Shoot us an email, a comment or a tweet and let us know what you think!

Letters, Nash Country Weekly, 506 2nd. Ave. South, Suite 200, Nashville, TN 37210

EMAIL: letters@countryweekly.com FACEBOOK: facebook.com/countryweekly

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Please include your name, address and daytime phone number with all correspondence. Nash Country Weekly assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material, including, but not limited to, photographs, artwork, manuscripts and letters. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

HANK'S A HUNK

C'mon, Nash Country Weekly. Really? Hank Jr. not in your lineup for Country's Sexiest Man? Bocephus set the standard for sexy—hat, shades, beard and all. He's fun, rowdy and, ohhh, his sexy voice. He gets my vote each and every year. Please start putting him in as a choice instead of a write-in. Thanks. SHARILYN NORTON | Omaha, Neb.

SHE'S WITH THE BAND

I am a 70-year-old lady who just recently discovered *Nash Country Weekly* and paid for my year's subscription. I am obsessed with Luke Bryan and his band members, especially lead guitarist Michael Carter. How about surprising me with an awesome article on Luke Bryan and his band members? Thanks.

DORIS SIMPER | Moulton, Texas

FACEBOOK

Beautiful person and soul. [Miranda Lambert] Love her.

GINGER ELLIOTT

I just saw Chris Janson for the first time at Luke Bryan's Farm Tour in McCalla, Ala., and I love Luke, but the one that put on the best show was Chris! I love him!!! Hoping to see him again soon!!!

LYNN TUCKER DOZIER

Congratulations to all the new members of the CMHOF. I loved listening to the Oak Ridge Boys when I was growing up. I find it fascinating that I just saw Jim Ed Brown on a rerun of Hee Haw just the other day. I so loved his music as well. All I can say is thank goodness for XM Radio! That way the people like me who miss the great country music from the '70s and '80s can still be able to listen to it. After all, the regular radio stations of today don't, and won't, play what I consider the foundation of today's country music.

RANDI MILLER

I have to say I am somewhat disappointed that I have not seen much of Chris Young in the magazine lately. He just recently returned from a very successful European tour and has a new album coming out in November. Please tell me we will see more articles in the future—maybe a cover? He truly deserves it. Thank you.

KARI KUTTLER

Thank you for last week's cover of George Strait.

CAROL SCHIRO

Congratulations Krystal Keith and Toby Keith! Such a beautiful little girl!

LINDSAY JONES

TWITTER

Love this man. @janson_chris in the new @countryweekly.

KELLY LYNN JANSON @kellylynnjanson

@countryweekly Thanks for all the love this past year!! You are all the BEST!!!

THE OAK RIDGE BOYS @oakridgeboys

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COUNTRY FOR LIFE

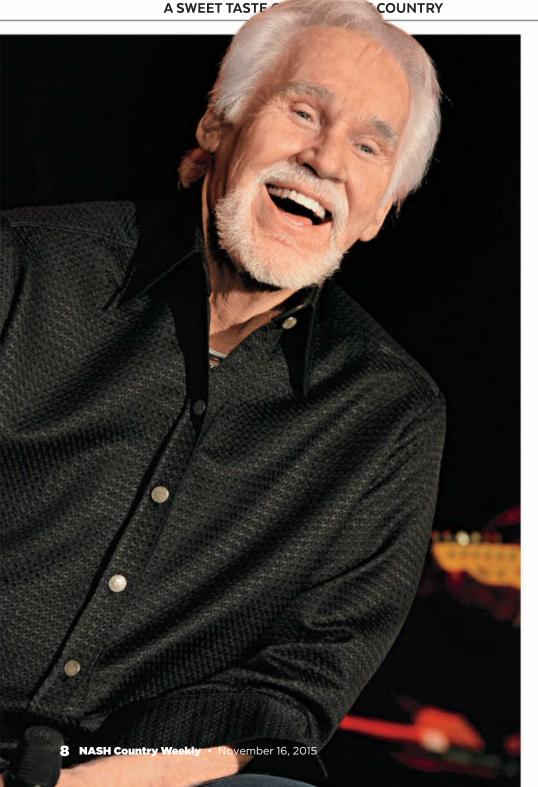




THE COUNTRY

BREW

Opening Act



A KENNY CHRISTMAS



To many folks, it's just not the proper holiday season without KENNY ROGERS and his annual Christmas & Hits Tour. You can celebrate the season with Kenny as he embarks on another holiday series, billed this year as the Once Again It's Christmas Tour. The tour, which features Linda Davis, gets underway Nov. 11 in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada, and continues its Canadian run through Nov. 22. The first U.S. date is Nov. 27, in Northfield, Ohio. Kenny will perform holiday favorites along with selections from his newly released album, Once Again It's Christmas. For all the tour dates, go to kennyrogers.com.





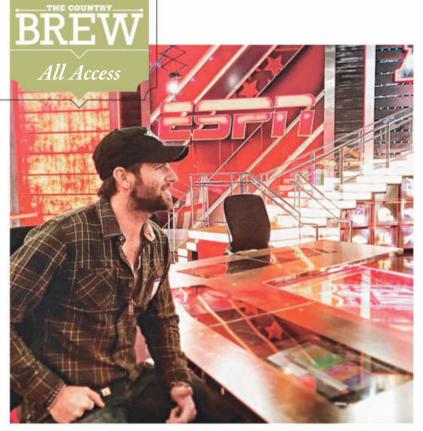


(Above) CAM-ERA TIME Cam (right) gets to hang out with Carrie Underwood—a photo op she excitedly shared with her Twitter followers: YOU GUYS I MET @Carrie Underwood!!!





(Above) STRAIGHT UP Tyler Farr makes a visual statement about his beverage preference during a recent performance; (left) A WINNING HAND Thomas Rhett locates his current Top 10 Tangled Up album in a Walmart music rack.

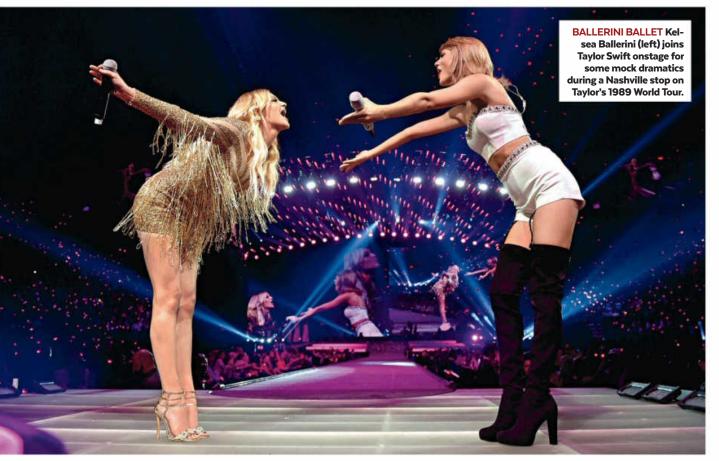


(Above) LOVE SPORTS LIKE THAT Canaan Smith enjoys a day at ESPN, where his song "American Muscle" aired on an installment of College GameDay; (right) A SHARP PAIR Maddie & Tae visit the office of popular website Pinterest in San Francisco.



(Above) THE BIGGEST LITTLE TOWN Reba McEntire (right) and Little Big Town surprise customers at Nashville club The Basement East, where they guested with The Shadowboxers for a version of Dolly Parton's "Jolene."







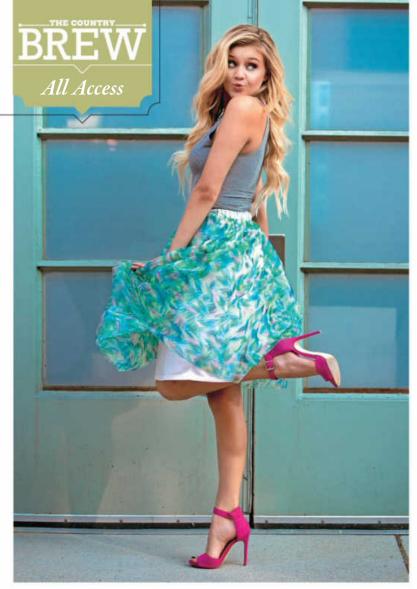
George Jones' White Lightning moonshine received platinum honors in the 2015 SIP Awards.

Come visit the George Jones Entertainment complex in Nashville, Tennessee and experience White Lightning, fine dining, live entertainment, river views and a museum filled with artifacts from the legendary singer.











(Above) Kelsea plants a smooch on her pooch, Dibs; (below) Kelsea is excited to find her seat at the Radio Disney Music Awards in May.



CAPTURED MOMENTS

It's been a whirlwind year for KELSEA BALLERINI since releasing her debut single, "Love Me Like You Mean It," in fall 2014, from performing onstage with a fan (below left) at the ACM Party for a Cause Festival in April to seeing her name (below right) on a CMA nomination as she and Steven Tyler made the announcements live on Good Morning America in August. Check out some of our other favorite Kelsea moments from the past year, including her Grand Ole Opry debut (right).







(Above) Kelsea gets down during a rehearsal; (below left) Kelsea sees her face in Nash Country Weekly for the first time; (below middle) Taylor Swift gives Kelsea a quick hair tip before taking the stage; (below right) Billy Currington and Kelsea hang before their tour date in NYC.



(Left) Kelsea unleashes her inner biker chick; (above) Kelsea performs on top of the Empire State Building in New York City in July; (below from left) RaeLynn, Kelsea, Danielle Bradbery, Angaleena Presley and Cam attend the Next Women of Country showcase in June.





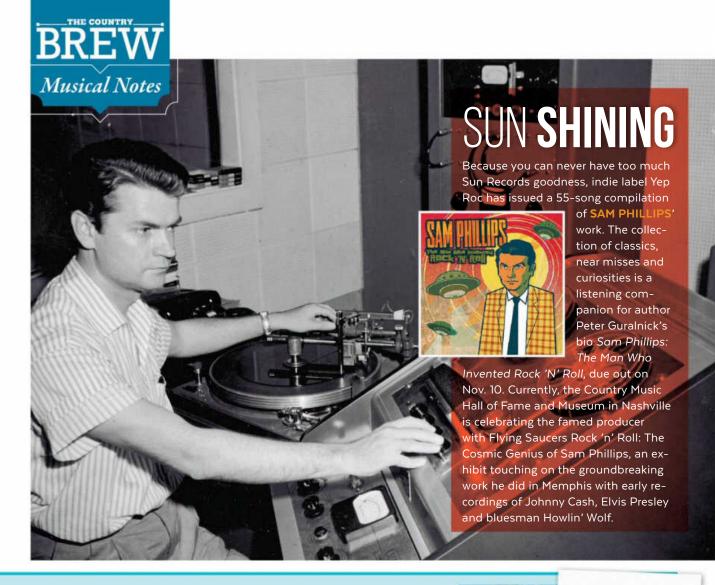


(Below) Kelsea helps celebrate Hillary Scott's birthday with a round of Dibs ice







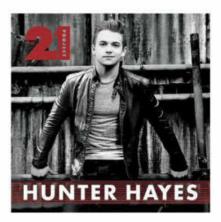


DOOBY DOOBY DOO

GARTH BROOKS and CARRIE UNDERWOOD will join JOHN LEGEND, USHER, TONY BENNETT, ALICIA KEYS and more to honor the musical legacy of Frank Sinatra on Dec. 2 as they take part in the television special Sinatra 100 - An All-Star Grammy Concert. The showcase will broadcast Sunday, Dec. 6, on CBS to coincide with Sinatra's 100th birthday on Dec. 12. Sinatra, who passed away in 1998, won nine Grammys during his illustrious career that spanned seven decades.







MULTIPLES OF THREE

Taking his single "21" to its logical conclusion, HUNTER HAYES has released The 21 Project, a three-disc set that presents one collection of seven songs in

three different ways: studio recordings, acoustic versions and live performances. In addition to the title song, The 21 Project includes "Where It All Begins," which features a guest appearance from Lady Antebellum. Currently Hunter is wrapping up his 21 Tour, which launched in October.

"This project has been a lot of fun for me, because it really brings the focus back to the music and shows how a song grows from its original form into something we play onstage," said Hunter, who co-produced The 21 Project with Dann Huff. "We're making our fall tour all about the music and connecting with fans in a closer setting, and just enjoying music together."



FAITH HILL is adding to her list of accomplishments with a new opportunity—executive-producing a new daytime talk and lifestyle series. The show, as yet untitled, will feature KELLIE PICKLER as one of the co-hosts and will be syndicated to television markets across the country.

"[Kellie] is a woman of so many talents," Faith told *Billboard*. "She possesses the ability to reach far beyond the camera and into the hearts of people, allowing you to feel immediately connected to her."

The series aims to cover such topics as cooking, home design, gardening and entertaining. Kellie and her other co-hosts, who have not yet been announced, will welcome experts from those various fields on each episode. Musical guests will not be a regular component of the series, however. Plans are for the show to launch in the fall of 2016 or early 2017. With Faith and Kellie on board, the show—whatever they name it—sounds like a surefire hit.

INSIDE THE 'VILLE

KELLEIGH BANNEN

is the talented, upand-coming singer/ songwriter behind songs like "Famous" and "Sorry on the Rocks," but she's also the brain behind the blog *This Nashville*



Life, which broaches such topics as fashion, beauty and, of course, music. She also gives an insider's take on being a woman in this crazy business, as well as the accuracy of everyone's favorite dramatic country music TV series, Nashville. Check it out at thisnashvillelife.com.

NEWS fNOTE

ENGAGEMENTS



Singer **RAELYNN** became engaged to longtime boyfriend Joshua Davis on Oct. 13. RaeLynn's hits include "God Made Girls" and her recent single, "For a Boy."



RACHELE LYNAE, whose current single is "Quicksand," recently became engaged to musician/producer Tim Creedon. Tim was formerly the drummer in Rachele's band.

TOURS

BLAKE SHELTON will kick off his 2016 tour on Feb. 18 in Cincinnati. Among his other dates, Blake will play Nashville on March 4.



THE OAK RIDGE BOYS will once again celebrate the holiday season with their Christmas Night Out Tour, which begins on Nov. 17 at The Oak Ridge Boys Theatre in Branson, Mo. The tour winds up on Dec. 23 in Nashville.

CHARLES KELLEY of

Lady Antebellum has announced his solo series of club dates, The Driver Tour. The tour begins Nov. 28 in Cleveland at the House of Blues and runs through January 2016.



REBA MCENTIRE and BROOKS & DUNN have added shows to their Las Vegas residency—Reba, Brooks & Dunn: Together in Vegas—at Caesars Palace. Additional dates are May 3, 6, 7, 10, 13 and 14, with possibly more to come.



015 · NASH Warry Weekly



GONE TO THE DOGS

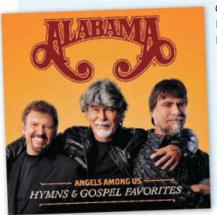
As part of the Grand Ole Opry's 90th birthday celebration, MIRANDA LAMBERT played a pair of shows and brought her MuttNation Foundation along for the fun. And because no one can resist a puppy, the Grand Ole Opry adopted a Labrador/terrier mix named Charlie to be the official Opry dog. The pooch has already had a busy fall after making his Opry debut. In late October, he was on hand to help celebrate Opry Goes Pink.





Rollin' On

ALABAMA added another piece of hardware to its already bulging trophy case at the 46th annual GMA Dove Awards. Country music's most prolific group netted Country/Bluegrass Album of the Year for their record *Angels Among Us: Hymns* &



Gospel Favorites, a blend of traditional hymns, new songs and a live version of the title cut, a classic Alabama hit from the early '90s. The recent honor came on the heels of the band's new release, Southern Drawl, which debuted at No. 2 on Billboard's Top Country Albums chart.

RUMOR MILL

DOLLY PARTON released a statement to let fans know she was not, in fact, suffering from stomach cancer. Baseless rumors aside, Dolly did have a few kidney stones removed in late September. We are happy to report that the superstar is back in action, promoting her new DreamMore Resort at Dollywood as well as working on her new movie, Coat of Many Colors, which premieres Dec. 10 on NBC.

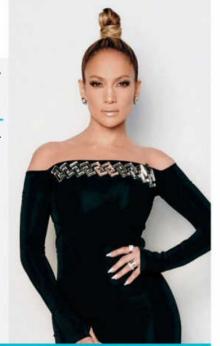
AMERICA **LOVES** COUNTRY

LUKE BRYAN and SAM HUNT proved their across-the-board appeal with nominations in all-genre categories for the fan-voted American Music Awards, which were announced in October on ABC's Good Morning America.

Luke scored a nomination for Artist of the Year, where he's up against the likes of Taylor Swift, One Direction, Ariana Grande and others from the pop realm. Sam is up for New Artist of the Year Presented by Kohl's, which also covers all genres of music.

American Music Award nominees are determined by key fan interactions as reflected in radio airplay, social activity, touring and other factors. The winners are chosen exclusively by fans. Below, you can find the nominees for each of the AMA country music categories.

JENNIFER LOPEZ will host the 2015 American Music Awards on Nov. 22, and ABC will be airing the event live, beginning at 8 p.m. ET.



AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS COUNTRY NOMINEES

FAVORITE MALE ARTIST



LUKE BRYAN



FAVORITE FEMALE ARTIST







FAVORITE DUO OR GROUP







FAVORITE ALBUM







FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE



SAM HUNT

WHAT'S THAT?

"CAJON" noun (pronounced: ka-HONE)

That wooden crate that the drummer is perched on at your favorite artist's acoustic show is much more than it appears to be. The cajon is a finely crafted instrument that can emit various resonant, drumlike tones, depending on where and how the player strikes the surface. Sometimes it has cords or springs attached to one section to give the effect of a snare drum. Watch the cajon player carefully. The good players know exactly where the "sweet spots" of their particular instrument are. It's fascinating!







When they come together on common musical ground, the three siblings who comprise THE BAND PERRY find easy unity. However, Neil, Kimberly and Reid each have a unique sense of style, and their individuality is obvious in their ward-

robe choices.

REID

Thoughtful and a bit introspective, Reid is a young classic, taking well-tailored items and hipping them up with personal touches. And no one rocks a manbun like Reid.

Reid's boots: Saint Laurent "Wyatt" Harness Boot

> \$1,295 at YSL.com

NEIL

Neil-the photographer of the grouphas an equally keen eye for fashion, reflected in fine detail and visual interest, whether in prints or colors.

Neil's shoes: Maison Margiela Leather and Suede **Sneakers**

\$705 at StyleBop.com

KIMBERLY

If "rock star/girly-girl" is a thing, Kimberly Perry invented it with her flair for combining feminine patterns, colors and textures with edgy accessories—and attitude.

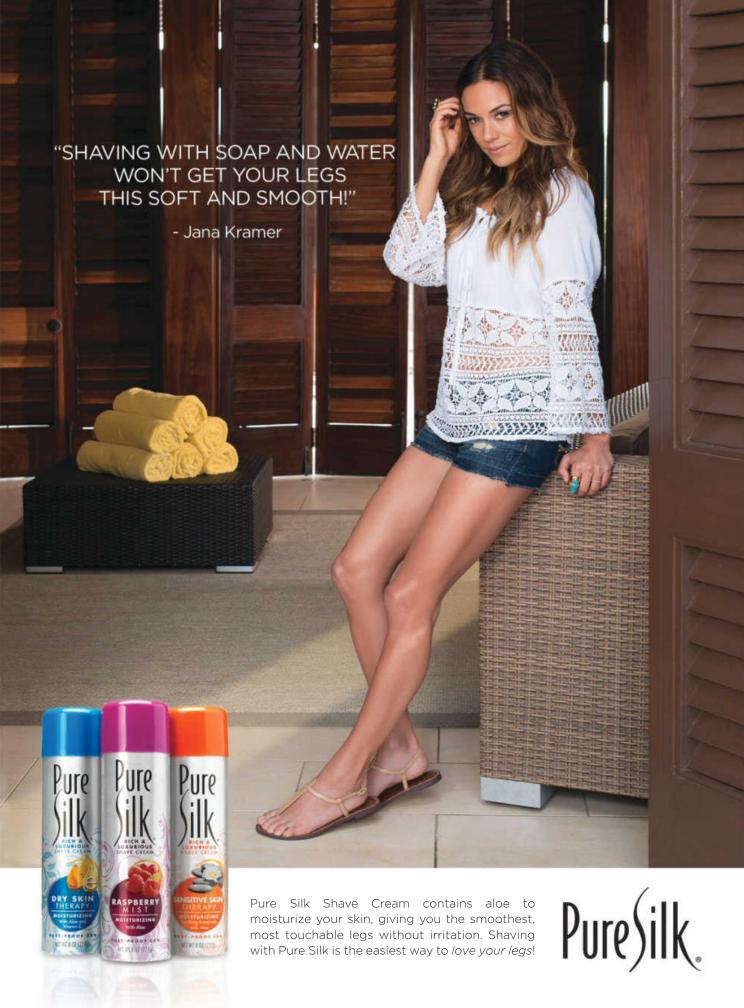
Kimberly's dress: Saint Laurent Studded Collar Silk Dress \$2,276 at Lyst.com













Mystic Wolf Designer Handbag Featuring the Dynamic Artwork of Diana Casey

Twill bag with faux suede trim, handles and tassel

Zippered main compartment offers roomy interior and 2 accessory pockets

Includes removable, adjustable shoulder strap (not shown)

> 13" w x 10.5" h with a 9" drop



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Embrace your love for the wilderness and your respect for the legendary history of Native American culture in a stylish way that is guaranteed to catch the eye of all those around you.

Featuring some of the trademark Native American "hidden image" artwork by Diana Casey, this exclusive "Mystic Wolf" Designer Handbag promises a captivating statement of style and utility. The mesmerizing art simultaneously depicts two Native American travelers journeying through the wilderness, and the image of a wolf's face. Both images are seamlessly blended together for a deeply absorbing effect.

This twill bag with faux suede trim, handles and removable tassel features a zippered main compartment, a roomy interior with an inside pocket, and additional flat pockets for smaller items. A removable, adjustable shoulder strap offers the versatility of a handbag or a crossbody bag. Decorative silver-toned hardware serves to further enhance the stylish design. Imported.

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Singles

Maddie & Tae "Shut Up and Fish" DOT RECORDS





Country music has a long history of songssuch as Hank Williams Jr.'s "A Country Boy Can Survive" or Jason Aldean's "Hicktown"—that play up the cultural divide between

rural and urban areas. Usually these take one of two forms: a male artist explains why country people are happier and better (Blake Shelton and Trace Adkins' "Hillbilly Bone"), or a male artist offers to expand an urban woman's horizons by taking her to the sticks (Randy Houser's "How Country Feels"). With their new single, "Shut Up and Fish," Maddie & Tae have found an oh-so-rare third formthe country woman's rebuke of a clueless, scheming city boy. Rather than dismiss city life outright. Maddie & Tae use this single from Start Here to level

their suspicions at a guy who shows up for a fishing excursion preposterously dressed in salmon shorts and a white V-neck and who clearly has *more than* just bass on his mind, sings Maddie Marlow, bending the word "bass" with gusto. He thinks he's got some charm, but she isn't having it: he's generally being annoying by attempting to hold her hand or talking too much. She's madder than a hornet in an old Coke can, trying to be serious about reeling something in while he's focused on making a move. The song's shuffling, Telecaster-heavy production is likely the

countriest-sounding thing on country radio, recalling the accessible-but-twangy heyday of the '90s. Maddie & Tae's playful sense of humor delights at every turn, but without seeming mean-spirited; if anything, it casts a knowing wink to any woman who's ever wanted a dude to cool his jets. Of course, they could always take Maddie & Tae's approach in "Shut Up and Fish": shove him into the lake and laugh.

JON FREEMAN

LONG STORY SHORT:

Maddie & Tae offer a boatload of hooks in the refreshing "Shut Up and Fish."

THE NCW JUKEBOX

10 essential sexy songs from our 10 Sexiest Men of Country.

SCOTTY McCREERY

"See You Tonight"

CHRIS YOUNG

"Who I Am With You"

CHUCK WICKS

"Hold That Thought"

GARY ALLAN

"The One"

GEORGE STRAIT

"I Cross My Heart"

ALAN JACKSON "I'll Go On Loving You"

LUKE BRYAN

"Strip It Down"

BLAKE SHELTON

"Sangria"

KEITH URBAN

"Raining on Sunday"

DWIGHT YOAKAM

"Fast as You"

LOOK FOR THIS NASH COUNTRY WEEKLY PLAYLIST ON



Kip Moore "Running for You" MCA NASHVILLE

A-

It's a head-scratcher—Kip Moore is an incredibly gifted singer and songwriter, a dynamic entertainer and, well, let's face it: he's hot. But so far, he's only scored one genuine smash with the ditty-licious "Somethin' 'Bout a Truck." But y'all, the Kipper is so much more than a ditty singer. In fact, as he proves again in his new single, "Running for You," there is a depth to this young performer that you might not expect from the current class of country singers. Kip and co-writers Troy Verges and Blair Daly have mastered the art of using just a few words, along with some poetic imagery, to say a lot. And the message of "I'll always be there for you" is driven home with a rockin' country arrangement that pairs a wicked, sticky electric guitar with Kip's sexy, gravelly voice, taking the message from comforting assurance to a desperate plea that would have any listener asking, "Why would you ever leave this man in the first place?" This isn't Kip's first at bat with a song that makes the ladies melt. "Hey Pretty Girl" and "Young Love" were also showcases for this compelling vocalist and engaging writer. He has already offered up his obligatory truck song—how about we let this talent swing for the fences?

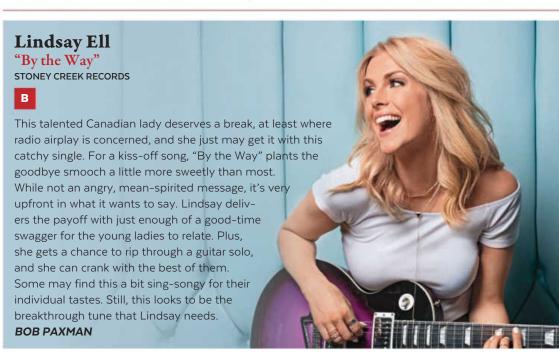
TAMMY RAGUSA

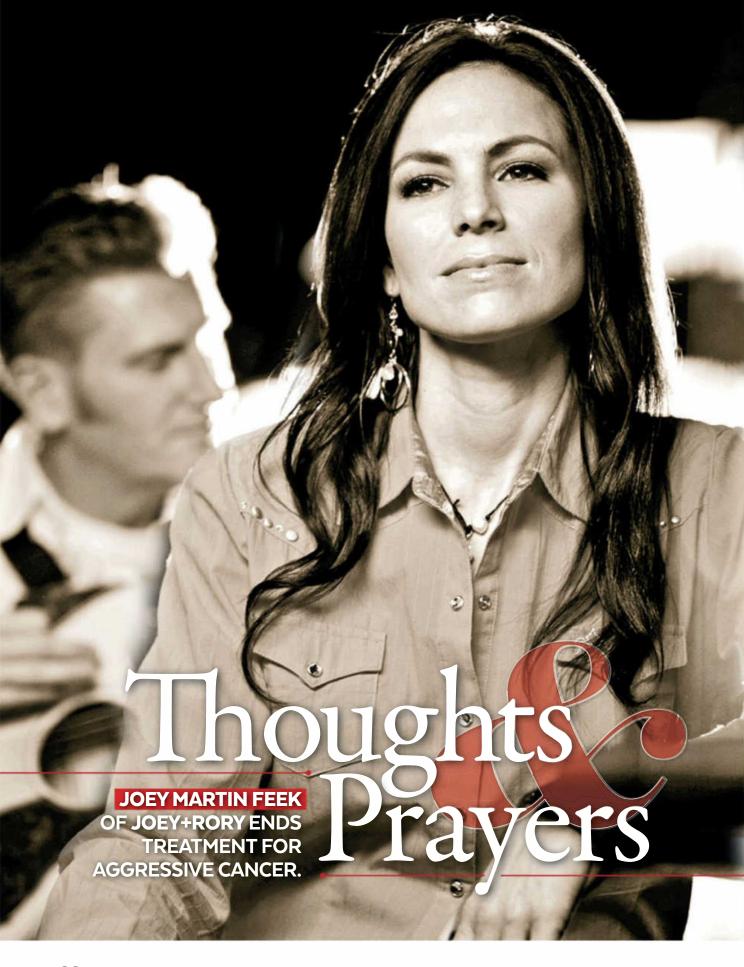


Toby Keith"Beautiful Stranger" SHOW DOG-UNIVERSAL MUSIC

B-

Not to be confused with the 1999 Madonna tune of the same name, Toby's "Beautiful Stranger" is more along the lines of a sweeping, '80s Kenny Rogers love ballad than up-tempo Material Girl. The first thing that jumps out about the song is the ebbing 57-second instrumental segment that precedes Toby's opening serenade about red wine kisses and hushing fingertips. In fact, in the opening frame, Toby sings It's been awhile since I've seen this side of you, an apropos sentiment in regard to Toby's emotive twang and the use of his higher vocal range, qualities that the straightforward singer doesn't frequently unsheath. In the give-it-to-me-now age of country radio, the song's instrumental prelude won't sit well with listeners—it will most certainly be cut down—but if you can find your inner Zen for a minute, Toby will give you three-plus minutes to make up for it. JIM CASEY









(Above) Joey takes time to read cards and letters that were sent to her while she was in the hospital in July; (below) Rory strums a tune while Joey sings along outside their home.





(Above) Joey+Rory in a promotional shot for their 2010 record, Album Number Two; (below) daughter Indiana brings a smile to Joey's face during a hospital stay for chemo treatment in July.



n the morning of October 23, Joey+Rory's Rory Feek shared a post on his This Life I Live blog, breaking the sad news about his beautiful wife Joey: her tumors had returned and additional smaller ones were aggressively spreading.

Joey was diagnosed with cervical cancer in June 2014. She underwent surgery and made a full recovery. But the cancer returned this year, and Joey, with the support of Rory, toddler daughter Indiana and all of their family and friends, started chemotherapy at the Cancer Treatment Center of America in Atlanta. Although Joey was feeling many of the typical side effects of

chemo, she was allowed to return to her Tennessee home after treatments to rest and recover.

"Sometimes there just aren't enough surgeries, or doctors, or chemotherapies or prayers," wrote Rory. "And you have to wipe the tears from your cheeks and say the words that you were hoping to never have to say . . . Enough. The doctors gave us an estimate of how much time they believe that Joey has, and we both looked at the calendar that hangs by our kitchen door [and] then I took the calendar off the wall and threw [it] in the trash can. So we don't have forever. We've got right now. And that's enough."

The devout couple has been the

picture of grace throughout the ordeal. The couple leaned on their faith even more after Joey's diagnosis. "I hoped that Joey would be one of the lucky ones that somehow overcame stage 4 cancer and [would] get to hear words like 'remission' or 'cure,' instead of 'I'm so sorry."

Before he ended his blog, asking for prayers for a miracle and for peace, Rory wrote, "I think in the end . . . the good and the bad, He just wants us to give it to Him. And so we do."

Our thoughts and prayers join those of so many country music fans who have come to love and admire this couple for their music, their lifestyle and their love.

TAMMY RAGUSA

CHECK YES OR NO

Gwen Sebastian

As Gwen Sebastian gears up for two Home for the Holidays shows in her home state of North Dakota on Nov. 27 and 28, Nash Country Weekly caught up with her for a little game we like to call Check Yes or No.

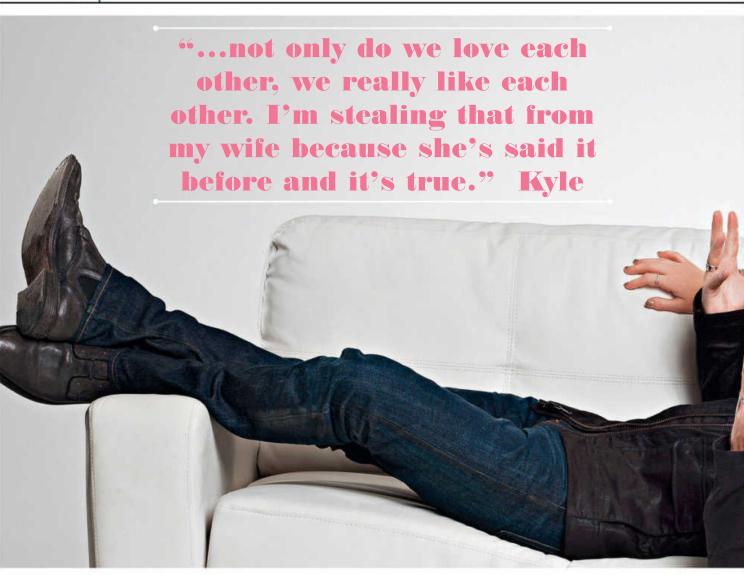
Have you ev	ver picked up a guy in a bar?
Do you sing	in the shower?
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Have you ev	ver played hooky?
Do you wish YES 🔲 N	n this was over?



KELLIE PICKLER AND HER HUSBAND KYLE JACOBS ARE JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE—EXCEPT NOW THEY HAVE A REALITY TV SHOW.

BBBAUE

BY TAMMY RAGUSA



Pickler and Kyle Jacobs, there is no gate requiring a code that to be sure, but Kellie and Kyle's housemodest by country star standards—is nestled in a neighborhood where, rather than erect a fence around the perimeter, they choose to truly be neighbors by not putting up barriers around themselves.

even more obvious upon crossing the threshold through the front door. Kellie is in the middle of a photo shoot for

her house is decorated for Christmas and while there is a flurry of activity around her as a new shot is set up, hug. She's limping a bit and has ditched her signature sky-high heels for fluffy slippers. "I dropped a candlestick and it shattered on my foot," she says matter-of-factly, then laughs to play off the injury as minor.

While a diva may have called off the shoot, Kellie is as real as they get, and the show-or in this case, the shootmust go on. This is part of the reason

ity show I Love Kellie Pickler.

As Kellie hobbles back to the photo shoot, Kyle dashes by and grabs a any family. There's lots of hugging, lots of good-natured teasing and lots of laughter. And even more love.

Like the classic Lucille Ball comedy series referenced in the title, Kellie's colorful personality is reason enough to tune in. But another part of what makes the show so interesting is that Kellie isn't the only entertainment business professional in the house. Her husband Kyle is an accomplished singer, an in-demand



No. 1, and then co-produced Lee's Hard currently working on Lee's fourth studio album, along with maintaining a busy

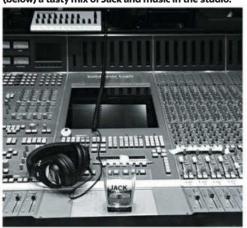
While Kellie finishes up her shoot, the chaos, Kyle darts in and out of the ing drinks to their guests. Aside from a ing room, one might never guess that a contestant and Dancing With the Stars no staged "grip and grin" photos with in plain sight. Instead, there are flowers, coffee mugs and homey touches their TV show will be like.

"People know that I sing and live on a tour bus half the time," Kellie says as she settles into a comfy chair around her kitchen table, legs curled under her and a cold drink in her hand. Although it's an unseasonably warm day, she's in a

For Kellie, it would seem that havto being behind the scenes. I'm used to being in the studio, I'm used to being in a little writing room in Nashville. however I want." "You can say whatever you want," Kellie chimes in, implying that their uncensored comments may



(Above) Kellie hits the Idol stage in 2006; (right) showing off goods from her Selma Drye Collection; (below) a tasty mix of Jack and music in the studio.







Underwood and I asked her, 'How do

Al photo by Ray Mickshaw/FOX; studio photo courtesyKellie Pickler facebook; Selma Drye Collection photos by Sheri O'Neal/Schmidt Relations; perf by John Russell/CMA

was it was a new creative experience. It was a new opportunity and a chance to think 'How can we make this as fun first, then you get used to it. It helped that the crew was so great."

The crew is from Ryan Seacrest Productions, with whom Kellie became friendly during her American Idol days, justment to have cameras in her home every day. "This is kind of new for me as well," she says. "As the show progresses, as each episode airs, you can sense us

mates-friends of the couple, many of not used to the spotlight at all.

it doesn't affect me the way it will affect some of the other cast members," she says, alluding to the possibility of unkind comments from some entertainment publications and websites. "At first it's hard not to be curious Some of the best advice anyone ever gave to me-I had moved to Nashville comment and it just breaks you down and you start to believe what peoself up to that world and the bullying that comes with it.' That was the best ful, you'll read those things and you'll never feel good enough. You'll never be good enough for everyone else in the for you." On the show, viewers will see a wisdom that wasn't readily evident in her ditzy personality on American Idol.

As concerned as Kellie is about



his wife and pals. "That was one of best buddies who really are our family, so it was like a team effort. We're all in this together, we all have the same goal of making this the best we can possibly make it. It's been this

"There were moments where for the past couple of months we've been able to document, like a video scrapbook, a fun, crazy summer. It's been neat to

that," Kellie adds.

other. And while they admit they don't always see perfectly eye-toeye, Kellie explains, "You set boundaries from the get-go. And you have to say, 'You know what? We're OK with shooting this, but we're not going to put ourselves in a position where it could jeopardize friendships, relationships or hurt people.' You have to first know what is the motive

each other, we really like each other. I'm stealing that from my wife because And so going through this, there was one mission for this whole show and it wasn't hard to do because it is us. The mission is love and laughter. That is what we wanted to accomplish. That was the whole mission."

It's been a long day for the couple, but even as the interview concludes and they say goodbye, Kellie and Kyle are offering dinner invitations and making plans for another visit to just "hang out." They joke and give farewell hugs. Like old friends. Like family.



SWEETNESS & IGHT

LAUREN ALAINA GREETS PERSONAL TURMOIL WITH A SMILE AND LIVES TO WRITE ABOUT IT.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA

THERE IS SOMETHING INNATELY

bubbly about Lauren Alaina.

Like a freshly opened bottle of Veuve Clicquot, she brings a little sparkle to everything she touches. As she only turned 21 on Nov. 8, she might not know much about champagne, but it seems wrong to compare her sassiness and effervescent personality to something as juvenile as bubble gum or soda pop.

As a teenager, Lauren won America over on the 10th season of American Idol, where she finished as runner-up. In the years since, she has become a funny, gracious, stunning and even more talented young woman. The voice that got her to the *Idol* finale has developed deliciously, retaining its dynamic energy, while the subject matter of songs from her upcoming sophomore album has evolved into something-understandably—a little more adult.

The four years since the release of Lauren's debut-2011's Wildfirehave been marked by big changes for the Rossville, Ga., native. Her concept of home was rattled to the foundation when her parents, Kristy and J.J., announced they were getting a divorce.

"This last couple of years were crazy," Lauren says, flashing a dazzling smile. "My dad is an alcoholic, but he went to rehab. I had just moved to Nashville and I spent a lot of time helping out with him because they did get a divorce after he got out."

Lauren's mom actually ended up marrying one of her father's old high school friends and now lives in Wisconsin with him. J.J. has also remarried. While Lauren is obviously shaken by this series of events, she







welcomes the chance to explain how the turbulent last two years helped inspire her self-titled new EP.

"That foundation that you've always leaned on gets pulled away and I had to figure out how to be my own person," she says, in a more serious tone. "I had just moved out from my



(Clockwise from top left) Lauren smiles for the camera with her father, J.J; Lauren waits with Scotty McCreery for the judges' decision during the American Idol finale, where she was named runner-up; Lauren obviously gets her bright smile from mom Kristy.

parents' and then that happened and it was kind of weird, because when I would go home, they don't live in the house I grew up in anymore. It was a lot of strange things to get used to."

She pauses and her smile returns. "And I've really gotten used to it now. It took me a minute. It was weird to see my mom with someone else and my dad with someone else, but they are both really happy and they were not happy together. And I think as unfortunate as divorce is, it really helps my parents to be better people."

She admits that she learned a lot about herself in the process as well,



(Below left) Lauren and her boyfriend, Alex; (below right) Lauren lays down some vocals for her upcoming second full-length album.





I hope the listeners can do the same," she says.

from it, I learned from it.

It wasn't just personal growth that Lauren experienced—she had an extended amount of time to make an album. She wrote with some of Nashville's best songwriters, who helped her cultivate and refine both her content and her sound. Lauren reminds us that. during that same period, she also underwent vocal cord surgery, which actually doubled her range. The heartbreak song "Painting Pillows" more than shows that off.

But the collection isn't all sad songs: the project's first single, "Next Boyfriend," is up-tempo and sassy. "I needed that fun, flirty, showcasemy-personality kind of song," she says, laughing. "I wrote it with my best friend and she's actually looking for her next boyfriend. I am not, currently, but whatever." Lauren laughs heartily and admits, "My boyfriend is so awesome about it. He told me I need to tweet [golf

champion] Jordan Spieth and tell him I wrote it about him, because I have a little crush on Jordan."

One song that Lauren did co-write for her boyfriend is the pop-infused "Holding the Other." "We've been together three years. He really helped me through a lot of what I went through," she says. "That was kind of a struggle to watch my parents separate. We're really young and my parents [married] really young, and it was this whole weird process where we were like, 'Are we too young for a serious relationship?' But we figured it out and we've grown in that way as well."

Now, on the other side of the personal turmoil, Lauren feels stronger and more ready than ever to tackle her career. She's excited to reconnect with fans and radio to share the new music.

She gets up to leave the room, but can't exit without hugging everyone at least twice. It's OK-maybe a little of that sparkle will rub off. NCW

LAUREN ALAINA CONTINUED

including how she deals with stress, sadness and, most important, forgiveness. "Forgiveness was a hard part for me because my dad was an alcoholic my whole life and then my mom divorced him right when he got sober, but my mom was married to an alcoholic for 21 years, so there was just a lot I had to process," she says.

What helped her to process the changes? For one, she used her music as a therapeutic outlet. "It was a lot of stuff that was a big adjustment, and I wrote about it," she says.

And she wrote—and wrote. At the end of two and a half years, Lauren had penned more than 200 songs for her album, which she is introducing with a five-song EP. The selections are a good representation of what happened to her family, what's to come and how she has grown from a teen to a woman. "I kind of wrote that music for myself in that time period; it was my therapy and I grew

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ack in 2011, Chris Lucas and Preston Brust were like a lot of other Nashville musicians—hardworking, respected live performers (then known as the LoCash Cowboys) battling the enemies of obscurity and listeners' indifference. They were starting to make some headway, as their single "Keep in Mind" was beginning to reach national audiences on radio.

Then everything began to come undone with swift, cruel precision. Their endurance and faith were tested to their limits when a series of tragedies and disappointments landed in rapid succession.

Their label at the time. Stroudavarious Records, folded right as "Keep in Mind" was moving inside the Top 40, effectively halting their progress with radio. They were put in the position of having to beg to be released from their contract so they could continue the conversation with radio.

It got much worse. Chris' father, Jack, died suddenly and unexpectedly, and then their band's fiddle player, Ryan "Troop" Jones, died after a short illness.

"[That] was the year that I think both of us agreed it was a perfect time for us to say, 'Hey, man, let's stick to songwriting," recalls Chris.

"It was happening every month," sighs Preston. "We were losing something every month. That takes its toll on you, whether it's a family member or a friend or a song that feels like a part of you."

The thing that began to turn the tide for them, when everything seemed to be going wrong, was a phone call from Keith Urban. The Aussie country star had recorded their song "You Gonna Fly" (which they co-wrote with The Cadillac Three's Jaren Johnston) and would be releasing it as a single.

"It changed our life after that," says Chris. "He probably doesn't even know how much he changed our life, but he did."





(Above, from left) Jaren Johnston, Keith Urban, Chris and Preston celebrate the No. 1 song "You Gonna Fly" in 2012; (left) Preston and wife Kristen tie the knot on the rooftop of the George Jones Museum in Nashville in September.



Today, in a small video studio located in the heart of Nashville's rapidly changing Music Row, Chris and Preston—now operating under the simplified name LOCASH—are understandably thankful to have emerged from those trying times in one piece. Indiana native Preston, LOCASH's animated baritone, keeps things light with a steady barrage of hilarious anecdotes and oneliners. Maryland native Chris, the duo's soft-spoken tenor singer, just celebrated his birthday in Key West and treated himself to some stylish new high tops. They have some genuine cause for excitement: their song "I Love This Life" is now-at Top 20 and climbing—the biggest hit they've ever had as artists.

"It's a surreal moment for us," says Chris. "We've been waiting a long

time for it. We've written some other stuff for other artists and watched it climb and that's been fun, but to really write something for ourselves as artists, it's unbelievable."

Waiting a long time might be the understatement of the year. As a pair, Chris and Preston have been making music together for more than a decade now, and their affable, separated-at-birth chemistry is winning new fans with each show. That's how they spent the rebuilding period between 2011 and 2014-mostly playing shows and writing songs under the radar, save for releasing the single "Best Seat in the House" in honor of Chris' dad. Chris got married and welcomed the birth of his first child. Preston also got married. The pair had built a lot of goodwill with ra-

DIY KINGS

When they were first getting started, Chris and Preston quickly built a favorable reputation with bookers and were routinely invited to emcee and perform at large country festivals.

"We were young, we needed the money," jokes Chris.

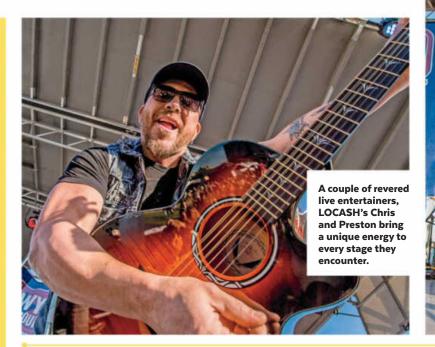
Before that they were making money at home by hosting shows at the Wildhorse Saloon and selling homemade CDs to tourists and visitors who happened to see them. Even back then, their aesthetic and personas were nearly fully formed.

"It was up to us to make 2,000 strangers feel like they had just walked into our home, into a house, and they were gonna get a show that night," recalls Preston. "We were tying it all together with the live band and with the dance floor and with the experience of Nashville. We developed this banter where the jokes would go back and forth on these two microphones. It seemed so natural, so early on."

Naturally, people responded and LOCASH started selling burned copies of their low-budget CD. They charged \$5 for each one and were raking it in. They stuffed the bills in a dressing room drawer at the Wildhorse.

"If I opened that drawer, money would just pop out like a jack in the box," recalls Preston with a laugh. "We were just fililng it full of cash. People would come up and they'd be like, 'I want to buy your CD.' We would make the CD right there."





LOCASH CONTINUED

dio, but the extended time without a single on the charts wasn't doing them any favors. And yet, seeing the responsive crowds at their highenergy, anything-goes live shows, it was hard to deny they had something. Why would they stop?

"When we go out and sing, the fans don't lie. They just don't lie," says Chris. "They're entertained. They're having a blast."

"How can you quit doing something that you love so much, you feel like you were born to do it and the fans are coming to the shows and loving it?" agrees Preston. "I know I never stopped believing in us-ever-and I don't think Chris ever has either. We just needed that one shot at radio, that real shot that never stopped at [No.] 40 or 30—you just kept going, and here we are. This is for real."

That positivity and resilience radiate from every corner of "I Love This Life," the lead single from their EP of the same name. As much as having a committed team behind the song has helped, at least part of its success stems from the kind of unbridled joy they emit in person. It's not simply a song about weekend partying or an endless dirt road (though it does mention one of

those)—it's about pausing to enjoy life's simple pleasures.

"I love singing it, and we kind of need more positivity in the world," says Chris. "We're living in a negative newscast right now. We're hearing some bad stuff and everybody's gonna watch the train wreck, that's the way it goes. But maybe having a little more positivity in stuff we see-maybe a hero's on the news rather than someone who shot someone."

Preston notes that it also has a built-in criticism deflector. "Who's gonna pick up the phone and call a radio station and be like, I just really don't like this song that says, "I love my life." I don't like my life, so don't ever play this again on this radio station," he says, laughing as he acts out this imaginary phone call.

Crazy as it sounds now, LOCASH almost let another artist record "I Love This Life." After Keith recorded "You Gonna Fly" and Tim McGraw made their "Truck Yeah" a single, they began to earn some insidethe-beltway respect as in-demand songwriters who could craft a hit. Without songs of their own on the radio, that was a reliable source of income for the guys.

Preston and Chris wrote "I Love





This Life" with Danny Myrick and rising star Chris Janson, thinking they might be able to get it on Garth Brooks' 2014 comeback album. A different artist put it on hold, but their demo was also played for their current label boss, who immediately signed them. Discussions ensued about what song to release as the first single, with most everyone agreeing it should be "I Love This Life." But Preston was being cautious, because he didn't want to sacrifice potential songwriting revenue if it wasn't going to be their single.

"Everyone kept looking at me like, 'It's off hold, right? We've got it?' And I'm like, 'Yeah.' And I'm thinkin' 'No! No way!" he says, laughing. "No, it's not off hold. In your world it is, but in my world it's going to the studio next week."

A few days later, it was decided: they were sitting in a conference room when their label's strategic advisor announced that "I Love This Life" would be LOCASH's new single.

"I'm like, 'Yeah! I knew it!" recalls Chris. Team members put their hands in a pile as a gesture of support for the task ahead. Everyone, that is, except Preston.

"They were like, 'Preston, where's your hand?' I was like, 'I gotta go

make a call real quick.' I slipped out the side. Literally I went out to the hallway and I was like, 'Uh, yeah, we're taking that song back. I need that one back in our hands," he says, mimicking the sound of an in-flight announcement. "And they were like, 'We're going to the studio next week.' And I was like, 'Uh, yeah, we're real sorry about that, guys.' But they were really cool about it and let us have the song back."

The I Love This Life EP delivers on the positivity promised by its lead single, offering six servings of personality like the fist-pumping "I Know Somebody" and the defiant "Ain't Startin' Tonight."

"You don't know what you'll experience over the course of a year that's going to affect a song you write next year," explains Preston. "This EP is a collection of songs that's like a window into our lives now of who we are and how we've matured and how happy we are."

The guys' domestic contentment is reflected on tracks like "Shipwrecked" and "Till the Wheels Fall Off," but they also maintain the pranksterish, fun-loving charm that first brought them to many people's attention. More than that, it demonstrates the strength of

their musical partnership when it's firing on all cylinders.

"This one emphasizes LOCASH," says Chris. "What is it that you want to know about LOCASH? What do they sound like?"

That's an answer many will come to know as "I Love This Life" climbs ever higher on the charts. Their long journey, rocky and imperfect though it's been, is still unfolding to reveal exciting new layers and possibilities more than 10 years after they started.

"I would rather have our journey right now that took us this long to get there," muses Preston. "But now we're a staple. We turned this into our life. This is what we do. This is how we pay our bills. I like our journey that we've been on. It's been a tough one. It hasn't been one for just anybody, but we've helped each other through it."

"If I'm down, he'll pick me up, if he's down, I'll pick him up," offers Chris. "My dad always used to say, 'It's a great life if you don't weaken.' And it's so easy to weaken, but if you don't, what's there to be negative about?"

Through thick and thin, the men of LOCASH have survived by sticking to their guns and-most importantly-sticking together. NCW





here's a certain theatrical flair to meeting Tim McGraw at a turn-of-the-century slaughterhouse in a historic industrial area of Nashville to talk about his new album, *Damn Country Music*. Sure, the 100-plus-year-old brick compound has been repurposed for get-togethers of this sort, but the rusty reciprocating saws and meat hooks that still pepper the meatpacking plant send an ominous message. Perhaps Tim just wants to chew the fat . . . or cut through it.

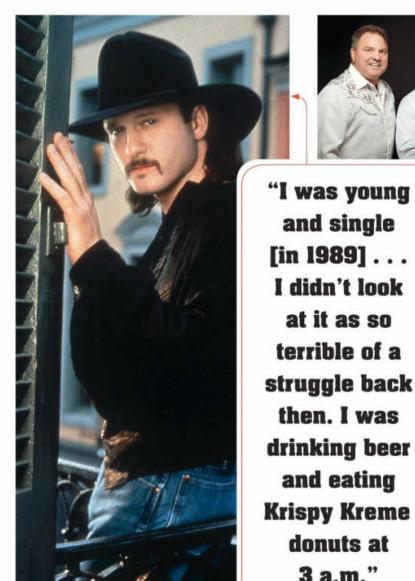
Fortunately, Tim flashes a smile instead of a bone saw when the sit-down begins. In fact, he's cool, calm and collected as he relaxes on a rustic stool with his hands folded, casually dressed in a pair of jeans, formfitting V-neck shirt, well-worn black cowboy boots and his customary black cowboy hat. His morning workout is out of the way, he's managed to get a bite to eat and he doesn't have to sit under any hot television lights for this interview. It's good to be Tim McGraw right now. That's the myopic view. Big picture-wise? Well, he's got a beautiful wife, Faith Hill, three happy teenage daughters, a highly successful country music—and acting—career and a new album. It's actually damn good to be Tim McGraw right now. And the *good* is something Tim likes to pay forward.

Take, for example, "Buy Me a Boat" singer Chris Janson, a guy who has been grinding away in Music City for more than a decade. Not only did Tim make "Truck Yeah"—a tune Chris co-wrote—a Top 10 hit in 2012, but he also recorded Chris' co-penned song "How I'll Always Be" on his new album, Damn Country Music. But it doesn't stop there. Tim also lent his vocals to a duet of "Messin' With Jesus" on Chris' debut album that dropped earlier this month, and, on Tim's Shotgun Rider Tour this past summer, he invited Chris onstage during a stop in Nashville to sing "Buy Me a Boat."











Tracy Lawrence (above left) and Kenny Chesney (below right) were two of Tim's favorite running buddies in the early '90s.



TIM McGRAW CONTINUED

The way Tim sees it, he's just continuing the long tradition of established stars lending a helping hand to deserving up-and-comers. Johnny Cash did it for Kris Kristofferson. Glen Campbell did it for Alan Jackson. Joe Diffie and The Gatlin Brothers did it for Tim.

"There were a couple of people who believed in me early on in my career," says Tim. "Joe Diffie was someone who took me under his wing a little bit like [with Chris]. And The Gatlin Brothers—Rudy and Steve-I did some shows with them early in my career before I had a record deal. We were playing some military bases. Larry [Gatlin] wasn't with them, just Rudy and Steve, and I was opening for them, playing with their band, and they asked me to sing a few songs with them each night as they kept going. Those guys believed in me from the beginning. They were always on my side. Every time they talked, they would say good things about me. Early on in my career, they really believed in me and helped me out."

donuts at

3 a.m."

Even though it's been more than 20 years since Tim established himself as a country music force with his No. 1 sophomore album, 1994's Not a Moment Too Soon, he still recalls what it was like to scratch and claw—pick and sing—to get noticed, pay the bills and eke out a living.

Tim remembers those days, but he also relishes them in a way that's contrary to a lot of others who bitch and moan about their plight. It wasn't all about the struggle. It was about the journey.

"I sold everything I had, bought a Greyhound ticket and moved to Nashville [from Monroe, La.] in 1989," says Tim. "I probably wouldn't have moved to town without the encouragement of my friends and college roommates (see sidebar). They really pushed me to do it. I played just like everyone else—I played for tips around town. Me and Tracy [Lawrence] and Kenny [Chesney] used to run around together and play these clubs and try to win these

Higher earning

"The first summer of my freshman year at college [Northeast Louisiana University], I went to a pawnshop and pawned my high school ring and bought a guitar," says Tim. "My grandfather actually went back to the store and bought my ring a few weeks later without me knowing about it. Over that summer-I'd played a little in high school just goofing off, but I was mainly concentrating on sports in high school-I spent that summer learning how to play guitar. I learned 50 songs, and in the fall I started playing for tips, but during that summer [my college roommates] were hiding my guitar from me because I was terrible. But they hid it as a joke, I think, because every time girls would come around, they'd go grab my guitar and bring it back to me and say, 'Hey, play some songs for us.' I was like, 'You want me to play to get you laid, but you'll hide my guitar when I'm practicing [laughs]?"

singing contests for \$50 that was based on the crowd voting. But I didn't look at it as a struggle. I was young and single and shared apartments and slept on friends' couches. I didn't look at it as so terrible of a struggle back then. I was drinking beer and eating Krispy Kreme donuts at 3 a.m."

It's an amusing walk down memory lane to hear Tim talk about scarfing down donuts in the wee hours of a beer-infused morning. More than a quarter of a century later, it still brings a smile to his face. Today, other things besides ielly-filled delicacies bring a smile to his face, like his wife, Faith, and daughters Gracie, Maggie and



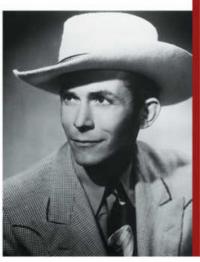
Audrey, not to mention his new album, Damn Country Music. Plus, he's so damn fit now—like a piece of sinewy beef from this slaughterhouse circa 1906—it's hard to imagine 48-year-old Tim would even consider eating a donut. So, family and music it is. And they just happen to intersect on *Damn* Country Music, most notably in the first track, a Celtic-imbued ditty featuring his oldest daughter, Gracie, on vocals.

"When I recorded that song, I just imagined playing it live," says Tim. "That's all I was thinking about the whole time I was recording it—how was it going to sound live? What's this going to feel like live? And I

couldn't wait to play it. The first time I ever played it live was with Gracie in Nashville. I never intended for her to be on the record or this song. but after I did my vocal on it and we were mixing it, I was lying in bed thinking about it for about a week, and all I could hear was Gracie's voice. Every time I would lay down, that song would run through my head and Gracie's voice was on it. So it took me a while to get up the nerve to ask her because she's way cooler than I am. I am not cool to her. I'm probably cooler than I think I am to her, but not anything she's going to let me know about. But I asked her, and she said 'Yeah.' We went to the studio and she sang it

Damn Country Music has three songs in a row—"Losin' You," "How I'll Aways Be" and the title track—that have Hank Williams references in the lyrics. While it's been more than 60 years since Hank's death, that hasn't stopped the current crop of hit songwriters from paying homage to the Hillbilly Shakespeare.

"How about that?" says Tim, as he steeples his fingers together excitedly at the allusions. "It wasn't intentional that we recorded all those songs with the references, but it was intentional to put them in that order [tracks 2, 3 and 4]. And they're all distinctively different songs, that's what I like about it as well. It shows in a lot of ways the influence Hank Williams has had on country music-when one artist can do three songs in a row on one album that are distinctively different songs and distinctly different styles and have a Hank Williams reference in all of them, that's pretty cool."





TIM McGRAW CONTINUED

great, but I wanted her to laugh at the end of it, and she didn't want to do that, so my biggest job was being in there trying to be goofy to make her laugh, and it worked."

It definitely worked. Daddy Tim must be funnier than he is cool. However, the remainder of the Timloving world probably thinks he's pretty cool, and that comes across in the rest of the new album, from the stellar single "Top of the World" (see right-hand sidebar), to the reflective title track to the back-to-backsongs that feature Hank Williams references (see left-hand sidebar).

"I wanted to make a record that felt good to me," says Tim. "I wanted to make a record that, after 25 years—and this is my 14th album showed the entire atmosphere of all the music I've made throughout my career. Certainly, it has a lot of what's going on in country radio, there's some elements of it, stuff I'm influenced by. But I know who I am as an artist, and that's one of the benefits of being around for a long time, just getting to know yourself as an artist and know what road you're on. But I'm also open. I have an open heart and an open soul to music. So I can go down the road I'm on, roll my windows down and if I hear something I like, or see something that's-I don't want

to say trendy—but something that's going on, then I like to incorporate a little bit of that into the core of what I do. So I think this album has a little bit of that and what has influenced me now-pop and country, some of the stuff that I hear on the radio and I like-but it's also got some of the stuff that made me want to move to town and want to make records. And I think that's the theme that carries throughout this whole album. There's just the passion for the music that I make that's in there."

The album's most powerful and pensive reminder of Tim's aforementioned passion is the last verse in the last song-the Lori McKennapenned "Humble and Kind"—where he sings When you get where you're goin', don't forget turn back around / And help the next one in line / Always stay humble and kind.

"That's the kind of person you always want to try to be, and that's the person I've always tried to be," says Tim. "I certainly haven't always succeeded at it at times. That's what I love about that song-it's probably one of my favorite songs that I've ever recorded, and I think, as a father, that's what you want to tell your kids and that's what you want your kids to live by. It's certainly something you heard as a kid growing up that you



were sort of taught, and as you get older, you can get something out of that song, too. I think kindness is something that we probably all innately have, something that we are born with, even people who aren't so kind probably think they are

being kind, or they feel like they are kind, or they want to be kind. Humility is something you have to work at. And it's something you have to be a good steward of, and you have to work hard at [it] and remind yourself daily. I think as a song in this day and age, certainly in the times that we live, 'Humble and Kind' needs to be heard."

And that's the meat of the message that Tim McGraw has cut through the fat to deliver on his new album. NCW



CAUTION **EXPLOSIVE** MATERIAL WITHIN

READ AT YOUR OWN RISK. NCW'S 10 SEXIEST MEN IN COUNTRY MUSIC MAY CAUSE COMBUSTION.

AS THE LONE FEMALE STAFF WRITER FOR NASH COUNTRY WEEKLY, I DECIDED THAT THIS YEAR'S SEXIEST MEN NEEDED A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE, BECAUSE SEX APPEAL IS ABOUT SO MUCH MORE THAN A GREAT SMILE, BROAD SHOULDERS, TOUCHABLE HAIR AND, WELL, OTHER PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES. IT'S ALSO ABOUT CONFIDENCE AND A SENSE OF HUMOR AND CHARM AND MANNERS AND A PLETHORA OF OTHER THINGS THAT WE WOMEN SOMETIMES DON'T EVEN REALIZE UNTIL WE SEE IT. AND WHILE YOUR VOTES DETERMINED OUR TOP 10 SEXIEST MEN IN COUNTRY MUSIC AND THEIR RANKINGS, IT'S MY PLEASURE TO EXPLAIN WHY. AND VOTERS? I GET IT. I TOTALLY GET IT.

BY TAMMY RAGUSA



10 DWIGHT YOAKAM

AGE: 59
MARITAL STATUS: Single
SEXIEST FEATURE: His confident sense of self and that thing he does with his hips.
SEXIEST VIDEO: "Fast as You" - If you think Luke Bryan has moves, wait until you see Dwight's swivel. And that midsong moan, yikes!

WARNING: He may not be what some think of as conventionally handsome, but there's a self-assured swagger in Dwight Yoakam that makes you do a double take. Possessing one of the most identifiable voices and styles in country music, Dwight glides across the stage, swinging his legs and his hips until your eyes are hypnotized. However, he's multitalented, with bona fide acting chops and a philosophical intellect, so a conversation with him is another kind of stimulating.



AGE: 48
MARITAL STATUS: Married
to Nicole
SEXIEST FEATURE: His heart
and the way his hair falls
over his eyes.

SEXIEST VIDEO: "Making Memories of Us" - Barefoot and curled up on the bed with a guitar, serenade us.

five minutes with Keith Urban and you might think he set the standard. Whether country fan or industry executive, in a conversation, he's completely engaged. Getting that kind of attention is incredibly sexy. And have you noticed how attentive he is to wife Nicole Kidman? Who wouldn't want to be her? But it's the way he ambles up to the microphone, guitar slung low on his hips, mesmerizing an arena but making you feel that he's singing directly to you, that has us in a daze.







AGE: 39 MARITAL STATUS: Single

SEXIEST FEATURE: His self-deprecating humor and his quarterback-like physique.

SEXIEST VIDEO: "Who Are You When I'm Not Looking" - Gentle, inquisitive and tender—the softer side of Blake Shelton.

WARNING: We all want a guy who can make us laugh, and Blake Shelton is absolutely that man; however, there's a time and place for everything, and those occasions when Blake becomes serious. sentimental or romantic are even more poignant in contrast to his zaniness. Not to mention, he hunts, fishes and knows his way around a garden, so he can protect and take care of us . . . when we let him.

COUNTRY'S SEXIEST MEN CONTINUED



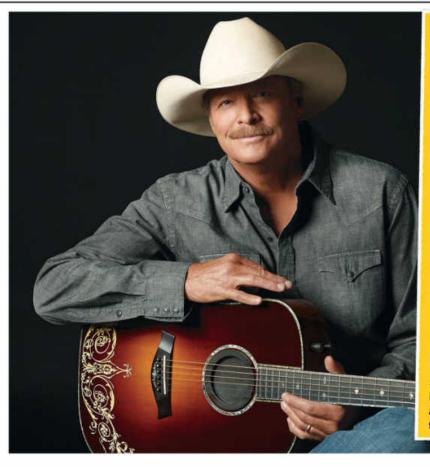
AGE: 39 **MARITAL STATUS:** Married to Caroline **SEXIEST FEATURE:** His sincerity and that dazzling smile.

SEXIEST VIDEO:

"Crash My Party" -You can't fake the expression on Luke's face when he sees his wife in this video. That's love.

WARNING: Sure, we could talk about what a great husband and father he is, and that certainly is a large part of Luke's sex appeal, but let's get real here. When a man can move the way he does onstage, it's very hard to take your eyes off of him. And Luke knows what his swiveling and shaking hips do to his fans, but has it gone to his head? Not one bit. That's the other part of what makes him so darn sexy-his humility.







AGE: 57 **MARITAL** STATUS: Married to Denise **SEXIEST FEATURE:** His thoughtful way with words and those blond curls.

SEXIEST VIDEO: "Remember When" - The way Alan and Denise look at each other while they're dancing is enchanting. And that kiss-sigh! WARNING: If being the strong, silent type is a thing, we're certain Alan Jackson invented it. He's a man of few words, but when he speaks he chooses words that absolutely matter. Or absolutely double you over in laughter. This tall drink of water has an acute sense of humor. There's an overwhelming coolness about Alan Jackson the country star, but there's an equally overwhelming gentleness about Alan the father and husband that makes Denise one of the most envied women in Nashville.

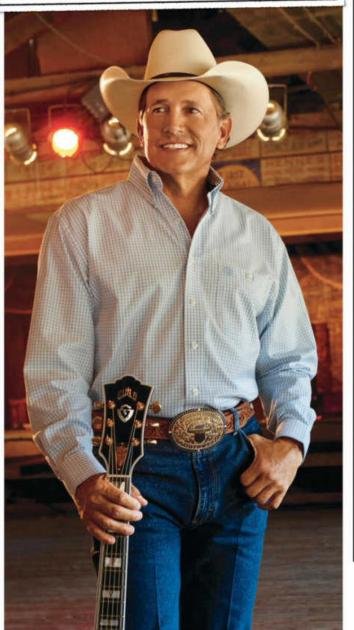


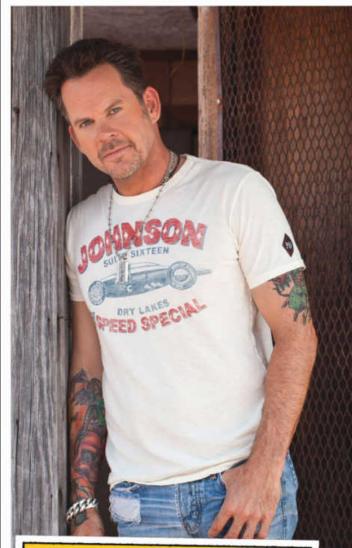
AGE: 63 MARITAL **STATUS:** Married to Norma SEXIEST

FEATURE: His

quiet confidence and his half-smile. You know the one. SEXIEST VIDEO: "If I Know Me" - Lots of George being George and Texas being Texas.

WARNING: Part of what makes George Strait so darn sexy is his loyalty and commitment to his wife, Norma. But let's be honest here. Part of the attraction is that he's a bit of a mystery. George lives in Texas, not in Tennessee, so he's away from the country music spotlight unless he's on- stage. And, for him, those Wranglers are no costume for someone playing the role of a cowboy. George is as capable swinging a rope on horseback as he is swinging a golf club on the fairway. Plus, he looks equally as handsome in a cowboy hat as a baseball cap.





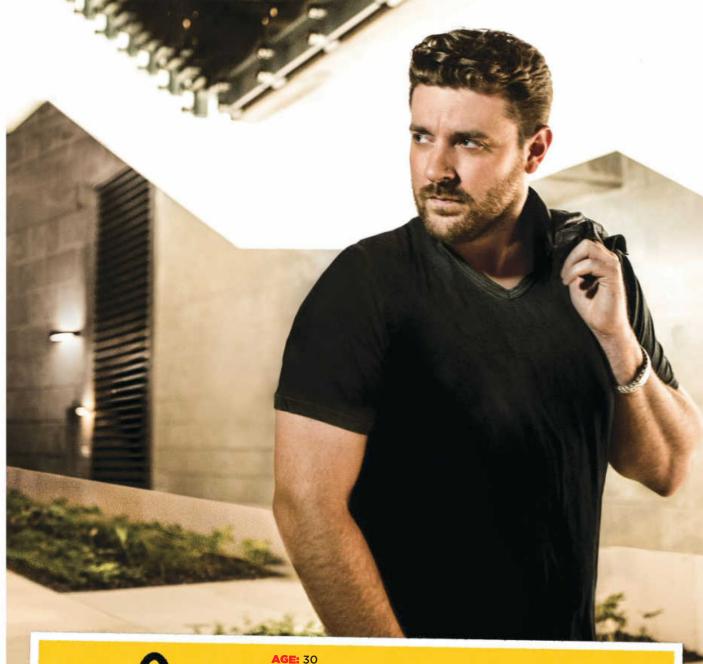


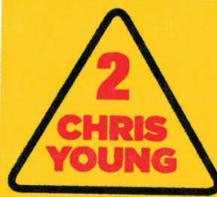
AGE: 47 **MARITAL STATUS:** Single **SEXIEST FEATURE:** His intellect and his right bicep. Oh heck, his left bicep, too. SEXIEST VIDEO:

"The One" - We love a man who sticks, and caresses and nuzzles.

WARNING: When it comes to raw sensuality, Gary Allan has it in spades. The thing we think is most sexy about Gary is that he's a dichotomy. With his tattoos, dark eyes and scruff of beard, he looks like country music's quintessential bad boy, but he's also a California surfer boy and a brilliant and thoughtful conversationalist with a quick sense of humor. Although he's a gentleman, we're pretty sure he could aptly and willingly defend our honor, too. A true Renaissance man.







MARITAL STATUS: Single

SEXIEST FEATURE: His warmth and his shoulders—his big, broad shoulders.

SEXIEST VIDEO: "Who I Am With You" - With all of that snuggling, cuddling and kissing, we all want to be her.

WARNING: If ever there was a country star who could be considered "dreamy," it's arguably Chris Young. Another Southern gent, Chris has the swagger of Rhett Butler but the tenderness of Ashley Wilkes. And when he flashes that dimpled smile, time stands still. Well over six feet tall and equipped with an SEC football physique, Chris gives Heismanworthy hugs. But really? We just want him to sing to us, in that rumbling baritone, all night. Well, maybe not all night.



SCOTTY McCREERY

AGE: 22

MARITAL STATUS: Single

SEXIEST FEATURE: His Southern grace, coupled with his crystal blue eyes.

SEXIEST VIDEO: "Feelin' It" - We get to see how he'd be as a boyfriend at the beach.

WARNING: Those of us who remember Scotty McCreery as the 17-year-old American Idol winner realized early on that this North Carolina native possessed more Southern charm in his little finger than Rhett Butler did in a suit. Brought up to know that "yes ma'am" is an expression of respect rather than a commentary on age, Scotty is all grown up now, but his impeccable demeanor and deep drawl still make for a lethal combination—capable of making a lady from Los Angeles feel as much like a sugar magnolia as a belle from Biloxi. In fact, as his latest single says, they're all "Southern Belles" in his book. That charm and those manners are as sincere and real as his cool blue eyes that absolutely sparkle when he knows he's about to get a giggle from a girl with his sly sense of humor. Faith, family and friends are his priorities, and that not only earns him respect but makes him even more crushworthy, because he seems destined to be a great husband and father. And honestly, does it get any sexier than that? NCW





I FT MF **HEAR** A HIT

BEFORE HE WAS SCORING charttopping hits and long before he envisioned standing onstage in front of thousands of screaming fans, Cole Swindell was finding his piece of happiness as a songwriter. He had hopes that someday those songs would land on the albums of country stars, but he was content writing them and sending them back home to his closest buddies in Georgia for their feedback. "They have every crappy song I've ever written," says Cole.

During his songwriting days, Cole collaborated with several of his Nashville pals on a regular basis, including one mashup with Jody Stevens and Michael Carter. Their goal for that particular day was to have fun, and the ambition seemed within reach after Jody shared a beat and concept.

Once they landed on the idea of writing a song about trying to get to know a pretty girl outside of the club environment, the three were off to the races. "We weren't breaking any new ground by any means, lyrically," Cole says. "We just knew that the songs that feel good are fun. Every fan doesn't listen to country music the way critics do. I love lyrics, and I love songs that can make you cry, but some people want something that makes you move.

"We knew if we were going to write a song like this, we had to come up with some lines that were a little weird," he adds. "Like you've got every guy in here, spinnin' around, spillin' their beer. I just pictured a girl walking by, and the guy going, 'Dayum!' and spilling his beer because he was spinning around so much. We were just trying to visually paint a picture."

The three writers continued to craft the perfect lines for their flirtatious song. "Let Me See Ya Girl," and then went on with their everyday lives soon after. "I



WRITERS:





FRESH PRODUCE-R

Not only did JODY STEVENS co-pen "Let Me See Ya Girl," but he also produced Cole's debut smash, "Chillin' It," which became the first chart-topping hit of Cole's career.

honestly didn't think much of it after we wrote it. My buddies kept telling me that 'Let Me See Ya Girl' is the only song people were wanting to hear back home, so I tried to get Luke Bryan to record it," remembers Cole, who was selling T-shirts on the road for Luke at the time. "It just never worked out that way."

As fate would have it, four years later Cole ended up recording "Let Me See Ya Girl" for his own album on Warner Bros. Records, releasing the tune as the fourth single from his self-titled debut.

"Sometimes you write songs and you hope that people are going to dig it," explains Cole. "If I've been there, maybe they've been there, too. But then other times you write a song like this because it simply feels good. It's just another song about trying to get to know a girl-I just never thought it would turn into what it has. We were iust trying to grab peoples' attention. and I'm thankful it worked!"

ALANNA CONAWAY



		V							The week of Nov. 7, 2015			
	TOP 25 BILLBOARD ALBUMS			TOP 25 BILLBOARD SINGLES								
TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST	TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST		Т	OF	10 AMERICANA AIRPLAY			
1	1	KILL THE LIGHTS LUKE BRYAN	1	1	STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN	I -		LW	TITLE / ARTIST			
2	6	TANGLED UP THOMAS RHETT	2	4	BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION		1	1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL			
3	5	COLD BEER CONVERSATION GEORGE STRAIT	3	3	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE	:	2	2	SERVANT OF LOVE PATTY GRIFFIN			
4	4	CASS COUNTY DON HENLEY	4	5	LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL		3	3	LOST TIME DAVE ALVIN & PHIL ALVIN			
5	7	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT	5	8	SMOKE BREAK CARRIE UNDERWOOD	4	4	4	PANHANDLE RAMBLER JOE ELY			
6	2	35 MPH TOWN TOBY KEITH	6	9	NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY	!	5	5	SERMON ON THE ROCKS JOSH RITTER			
7	8	CLOSER (EP) KANE BROWN	7	10	I'M COMIN' OVER CHRIS YOUNG		6	6	SOUTH BROADWAY ATHLETIC CLUB BOTTLE ROCKETS			
8	3	THIRTY ONE JANA KRAMER	8	11	GONNA BLAKE SHELTON		7	8	GATES OF GOLD LOS LOBOS			
9	13	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH	9	7	SAVE IT FOR A RAINY DAY KENNY CHESNEY	1	8	9	CASS COUNTY DON HENLEY			
10	10	JEKYLL + HYDE ZAC BROWN BAND	10	2	GONNA WANNA TONIGHT CHASE RICE	9	9	10	HARD TO PLEASE THE BLACK LILLIES			
11	12	ILLINOIS BRETT ELDREDGE	11	12	GONNA KNOW WE WERE HERE JASON ALDEAN		0	7	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES			
12	9	SOUTHERN DRAWL ALABAMA	12	13	BURNING HOUSE CAM	-		TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS*				
13	17	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN	13	14	TOP OF THE WORLD TIM McGRAW		w					
14	14	START HERE MADDIE & TAE	14	15	STAY A LITTLE LONGER BROTHERS OSBORNE		1	RE	ITLE / ARTIST RENEGADE RUNAWAY CARRIE UNDERWOOD			
15	15	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN	15	17	ALREADY CALLIN' YOU MINE PARMALEE		2		REAK UP IN A SMALL TOWN			
16	11	SQUELCH JASON BOLAND AND THE STRAGGLERS	16	16	RUN AWAY WITH YOU BIG & RICH		3		STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN			
17	16	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE	17	18	I GOT THE BOY JANA KRAMER		4		DIE A HAPPY MAN THOMAS RHETT			
18	-	TODAY IS CHRISTMAS LEANN RIMES	18	19	DIBS KELSEA BALLERINI		5		BURNING HOUSE CAM			
19	18	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT	19	20	I LOVE THIS LIFE LOCASH		TO AN	DP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY/ MERICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS*				
20	19	ANGELS AND ALCOHOL ALAN JACKSON	20	21	DIE A HAPPY MAN THOMAS RHETT	Н	-		E / ARTIST			
21	22	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE	21	23	COUNTRY NATION BRAD PAISLEY		1		ORYTELLER RRIE UNDERWOOD			
22	-	US TIME STONEY LaRUE	22	24	WE WENT RANDY HOUSER		2		OLD BEER CONVERSATION CORGE STRAIT			
23	21	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY, VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS	23	22	BREAK UP IN A SMALL TOWN SAM HUNT		3		ELOADED: 20 #1 HITS AKE SHELTON			
24	27	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD	24	26	BACKROAD SONG GRANGER SMITH		4		EVOLUTION RANDA LAMBERT			
	24	GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND	25	25	21 HUNTER HAYES		5	ME	AMA TRIED ERLE HAGGARD & THE STRANGERS			
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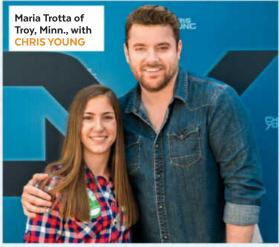
TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
2	2	SERVANT OF LOVE PATTY GRIFFIN
3	3	LOST TIME DAVE ALVIN & PHIL ALVIN
4	4	PANHANDLE RAMBLER JOE ELY
5	5	SERMON ON THE ROCKS JOSH RITTER
6	6	SOUTH BROADWAY ATHLETIC CLUB BOTTLE ROCKETS
7	8	GATES OF GOLD LOS LOBOS
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9	10	HARD TO PLEASE THE BLACK LILLIES
10	7	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
r	d	TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS*
ľ		TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS*
	TITLE	
TW	RE CA	ARTIST
TW 1	RE CA BR SA	E / ARTIST ENEGADE RUNAWAY RRIE UNDERWOOD REAK UP IN A SMALL TOWN
TW 1 2	RE CA	E/ARTIST ENEGADE RUNAWAY RRIE UNDERWOOD REAK UP IN A SMALL TOWN M HUNT RIP IT DOWN
TW 1 2 3	RE CA	E/ARTIST ENEGADE RUNAWAY RRIE UNDERWOOD REAK UP IN A SMALL TOWN M HUNT RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN EA HAPPY MAN IOMAS RHETT IRNING HOUSE
TW 1 2 3 4 5 TO	RECAMBRA SAME SAME SAME SAME SAME SAME SAME SAM	E/ARTIST ENEGADE RUNAWAY RRIE UNDERWOOD REAK UP IN A SMALL TOWN M HUNT RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN EA HAPPY MAN IOMAS RHETT IRNING HOUSE
TW 1 2 3 4 5 TO	BR SA ST LU DIII TH	E/ARTIST ENEGADE RUNAWAY RRIE UNDERWOOD REAK UP IN A SMALL TOWN M HUNT RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN EA HAPPY MAN IOMAS RHETT JENING HOUSE IM TRENDING COUNTRY/ ICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS*
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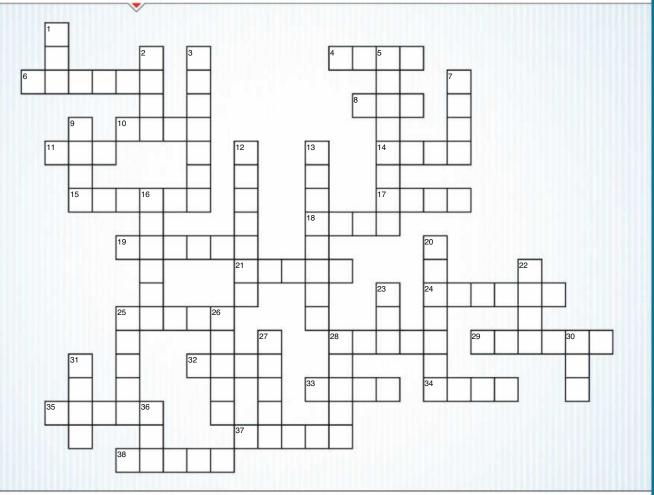
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ACROSS

- "You Shouldn't Kiss Me Like This" singer
- 6 Largest of the Hawaiian Islands
- "Break Up in a Small Town" singer
- Diamond Rio's "____ in
- the Middle"
- Thomas Rhett's "____a Happy Man"
- 14 NASCAR driver Stewart
- 15 Large saltwater bay in Canada
- 17 New artist Brooke ___
- 18 The College of William and
- Storyteller artist
- 2016 Republican presidential candidate Fiorina

Fjords are here

- [75] Illinois artist
- 28 Jeanne Pruett's "____ Sheets"
- Joe Nichols' "____ Like Me"
- Kurt Vonnegut novel Slaughterhouse
- Linda Ronstadt's "You're
- Rosanne Cash's "Seven Year _____"
- George Strait's "I My Heart"
- 27 Cartoon character Oyl
- 33 Up to ____

DOWN

- A ____ change
- Jennifer Nettles' Playing With ____Tour
- 2015 Matt Damon movie The_
- "Stone Cold Sober" singer
- Kenny Rogers' "____, Don't Take Your Love to Town"
- Rascal Flatts' "My ____"
- Alabama's "Close Enough
- 13 "Already Callin' You Mine" artist
- TV show The Blacklist's star James ____
- 20 "I Saw the Light" (female) singer

- Donna Fargo's "Funny ____"
- Reba McEntire's "Going __ Like That"
- Buffalo's NFL team
- 26 Merle Haggard's "Mama ____"
- 27 Perfectly Clear crossover artist
- 28 Carrie Underwood's "____ Break"
- Security agency for the former Soviet Union
- Lorrie Morgan's "What ____ of No"
- Fig. Thomas is to Rhett



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Managing Editor Jon Freeman

Deputy Editor Jim Casey

Senior Writers Bob Paxman, Tammy Ragusa

> Art Director Chris Allen

Graphic Designer Martha Ressler

Production Manager Will Branham

Photo Editor Elissa C. Newland

Assistant Photo Editor

Carissa Riccardi

Web Producer/Designer Jason Simanek

Copy Editors

John Reiman, Steve Morley

ADVERTISING SALES

Publisher

Jeff Meltesen

For all advertising inquiries contact 615-727-6952 jmeltesen@countryweekly.com

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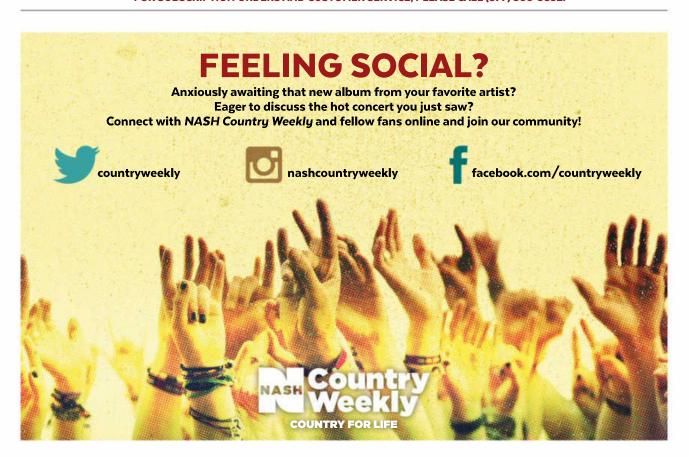
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"I owe a lot to Friday Night Lights and getting that part [as alcoholic/abusive father Charles Billingsley]. The funny thing is, in the years of doing music and before Friday Night Lights, I was



offered a lot of parts before that, but I was always afraid to do it because I didn't want to screw up the thing that I did well. Music is all about being cool, right? It's all about putting on this cool persona and being this cool guy. But with acting, sometimes you can't be cool. You're not supposed to be cool, you're supposed to be this character. So I was a little afraid of it. But that movie, because it was such a great movie and such a great character and cast and everyone involved with it, it gave me an opportunity to do some other fun stuff." TIM McGRAW

FIRST PICK-LER

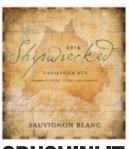
BILLY RAY CYRUS, CHUCK WICKS, SARA **EVANS** and WYNONNA JUDD are

among the country stars who have traded in their microphones for dancing shoes on ABC's hit reality competition Dancing With the Stars, but only one has reigned supreme: KELLIE PICKLER. On her way to the Season 16 crown, Kellie notched



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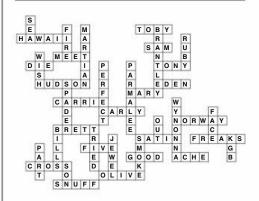


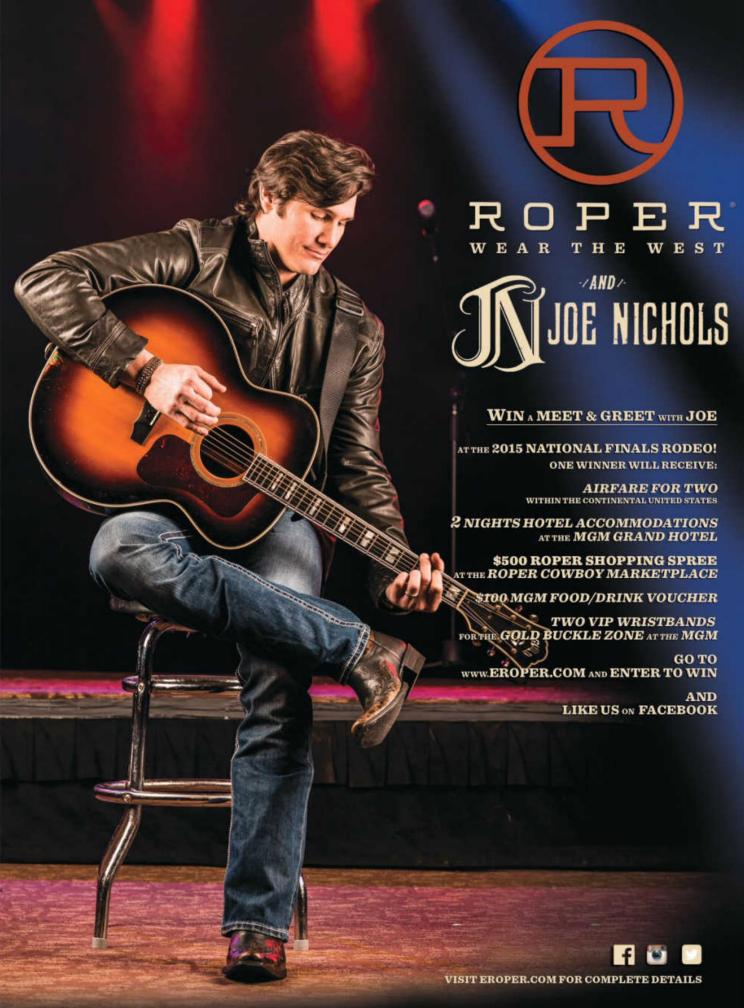
CRUSHIN'

🍕 In April, **LOCASH** released their own signature line of wine, Shipwrecked, joining other vino-loving songsters who create boot-stomping music as well as foot-stomped grapes. KIX

BROOKS (Arrington Vineyards), MIRANDA LAMBERT (Red 55 Winery) and AARON TIPPIN (Stonehaus Winery) all dabble in the art of corked libations.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION (SEE PAGE 60)





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